

FW: Session Follow-up & Catching Up

Thompson, Mary Jo

Mon 12/11/2017 11:42 AM

To: Kessler, Hannah <Hannah.Kessler@wv.gov>;

2 attachments (594 KB)

session_summary.docx; Recovery Summit Meeting Notes - 20171116.docx;

From: Snyder, Kevin [mailto:kevin.snyder@fema.dhs.gov]

Sent: Friday, December 8, 2017 10:43 AM

To: Thompson, Mary Jo <Mary.Jo.Thompson@wv.gov>

Subject: Session Follow-up & Catching Up

Hi Mary Jo,

Hope this message finds you doing well. Attached is a draft summary document and detailed notes from last month's "Session." It'd be great to get your feedback and input before distributing to a wider audience. (Also, does your staff have a sign-in sheet from the day?). We think a follow-up to the Session, probably with a much smaller list of invitees, is necessary to solidify/memorialize the decisions that were made on 11/7. I'm hoping you and I can get together next week, preferably Wednesday if possible, to discuss. Let me know if you have some time available.

Thanks,
Kevin

Kevin Snyder

Director, West Virginia Recovery Office (DR-4273-WV)

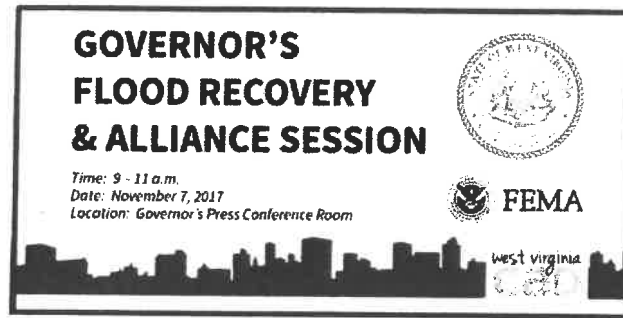
Disaster Recovery Manager, DR-4331-WV

Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator

FEMA Region III

(M) 202.340.7065

kevin.snyder@fema.dhs.gov



Meeting Summary & Outline of Unified Strategy

I. Summary

On November 7, 2017, Governor Jim Justice convened senior-level state and federal officials to create a unified strategy regarding disaster recovery funds from the floods of 2016. The discussion was the first in a series of senior level meetings to look at strategically aligning those funds. The meeting was an important step in the creation of the strategy and empowered appointed action officers to create a strategy to align and leverage the disaster funding.

The action officers were tasked to further explore options and bring recommendations to the senior officials for approval. They will meet on a more regular basis to draft a unified strategy for 2016 funds and delve into the roles and responsibilities of state departments and divisions. This role will also support the establishment of the West Virginia State Resiliency Office (SRO). All efforts combined will ensure that West Virginia becomes more resilient and continues to take a unified and strategic approach to disaster recovery.

The facilitated discussion addressed five major topics:

- 1. Ranked Priorities**
- 2. Guiding Principles**
- 3. Reprioritization of Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) Applications**
- 4. Reallocation of Community Development Block Grant –Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Funds**
- 5. Role of Action Officers**

Sections II through VI of this document provide more detail on each major topic and what was agreed to during the Session. These sections can serve as the basis for a unified strategy regarding 2016 flood funding. The final section (VII) proposes next steps for the senior leadership group and the action officers.

Also included are two appendices: a list of Session attendees and detailed notes from the proceedings.

II. Ranked Priorities

Much of the morning session focused on the need to identify priorities for the State's disaster recovery funds from the June 2016 floods. The disaster marked the first time that West Virginia received a CDBG-DR allocation and it was the largest amount of HMGP funds ever received. Due to the complexity of the situation, the meeting was convened to ensure that there was a holistic strategy for the use of these recovery funds. The facilitator proposed overarching priority areas based upon the functional areas where funds were already earmarked. This led to a lengthy and detailed discussion regarding priorities. The resulting ranked priority areas were identified, ranked and confirmed:

1. Infrastructure
2. Economic Development
3. Housing

III. Guiding Principles

While determining priorities, participants discussed overarching ideas or principles that should influence all decision making in the state. The prevalent theme in the discussion was ensuring that funding decisions and recovery efforts should decrease risk over time and make communities more resilient. It was decided that the group would use guiding principles to serve as "decision points" when looking at the merit of state funded projects, with three guiding principles identified:

1. Resiliency
2. Mitigation
3. Job Creation

IV. Reprioritization of HMGP Applications

With the influx of disaster recovery funds, recovery programs have the potential to duplicate efforts and even convolute the recovery process. Concerns were raised that both CDBG-DR and HMGP were allocating more funding towards housing recovery than the existing unmet need. There was also discussion about needs in the other function areas. The West Virginia Department of Homeland Security & Emergency Management (WV DHSEM) and the West Virginia Department of Commerce (WV DOC) began meetings to discuss in part how to best coordinate the two programs. As a result of these meetings and the Session, the WV DHSEM is now looking at the reprioritization of grant applications and ways to streamline the HMGP/CDBG-DR funding match, with agreement on the following:

1. WV DHSEM will review their submitted applications and prioritize infrastructure projects before housing.
2. Housing will still be addressed through HMGP, but all applicants will be given the opportunity to apply for housing assistance through the CDBG-DR program.
3. WV DHSEM and WV DOC will coordinate to ensure that all applicants are served by the program that best fits their situation and needs.
4. WV DHSEM and WV DOC will continue to meet and discuss coordination of the two programs and the CDBG-DR match for the HMGP program.

V. Reallocation of CDBG-DR Funds

A large portion of the meeting revolved around the HUD CDBG-DR program and how it can strategically support recovery. Currently, over \$100 million is allocated to address the unmet housing need in the impacted areas. Through efforts by VOAD and other volunteer groups, it is estimated that over 1,000 homes have been rebuilt or rehabbed since June 2016. Participants of the session questioned whether there was \$100 million left in unmet housing needs, or if some of the funding should be reallocated to support infrastructure and economic development. WV DOC agreed to work with HUD to determine the steps and requirements to ultimately reallocate funds once the housing need has been fully met. HUD has outlined the necessary steps to reallocate the funds so that the state can address other unmet needs:

1. If the State wishes to revise their action plan amendment to eliminate or reduce housing activity, they will need to provide revised unmet need data and strong evidence that unmet disaster related Low/Moderate Income (LMI) housing needs have been met.
2. The State will also need to provide data to support unmet needs for proposed replacement activities (e.g. infrastructure or economic development projects). The 11/21/16 Federal Register notice says that given the large damage to housing from the disaster, the State should focus on unmet housing need, but it does allow for States to allocate funds to infrastructure or economic development.
3. If the state wishes to undertake infrastructure or economic development activities, they must do the following:
 - a. Amend their action plan
 - b. Provide data for unmet infrastructure or economic development needs
 - c. Provide information about how unmet housing needs have been met, or how infrastructure or economic development activities will contribute to the restoration of housing and long-term recovery in the most impacted and distressed communities.

VI. Proposed Role of Action Officers

The senior officials agreed that the action officers will be the point of contact and participate in subsequent meetings regarding the development and implementation of the priorities/strategies developed at the session. The officers have a working knowledge of the agency's programs, resources and authorities and will be available to meet and represent their respective agency through implementation. Federal partners will serve in an advisory/consulting role as needed during the implementation process. During the first session, there was consensus that the action officers should address the following specific tasks:

1. Identify agency programs, resources and authorities to support disaster recovery.
2. Address priority areas where consensus was not gained and provide recommendations to senior officials.
3. Identify additional resources and technical assistance that can be offered to disaster impacted communities.
4. Identify additional coordination opportunities within their respective departments and network.
5. Create the framework and strategies for an action plan related to recovery efforts.

VIII. Proposed Next Steps

Since the session, there have been multiple meetings of the Action Officers and discussions regarding implementation of the established priorities and principles. These discussions have evolved to include roles and responsibilities of the SRO and future meetings will work to simultaneously address both initiatives. The key focus will be to ensure that the disaster funds from 2016 are strategically expended, while also establishing the SRO and championing resiliency across all sectors of the state. To do so, stakeholders will need to continue to meet on a regular basis and ensure that a strong focus and commitment is made to resiliency.

Additionally:

1. Reconvene a follow-up "session" to the 11/7/2017 Session
2. Merge the roles and responsibilities of action officers with committee assignments for SRO board.
3. Continue to meet at the action officer level to implement decisions made by senior officials.
4. Assist with the creation of the SRO charter, framework and work plan.
5. Bring recommendations to the senior officials and SRO board for review and approval.
6. Continue to meet until all funds from 2016 are allocated and the SRO is fully established.

Governor's Flood Recovery and Alliance Session – Meeting Notes – 1st Session

Date: November 7, 2017

Time: 9:00 a.m. – 11:12 a.m.

Attendees: See Sign-in Sheet

9:17 a.m.

- The meeting kicked off with Governor Jim Justice addressing the audience. The Governor discussed the promising future of West Virginia with new development and job opportunities.

9:38 a.m.

- Mr. Kevin Snyder, Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator and Director of the West Virginia Recovery Office, provided background on the various funding sources available to the State of West Virginia through FEMA's Individual Assistance, Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation Grant programs and HUD's Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) allocations.
- Also spoke of the establishment and stand-up of the West Virginia State Resiliency Office (SRO) and the role the SRO could play in coordinating disaster recovery and enhancing community resiliency.
- Spoke of this time being an opportunity to move forward with a unified vision and strategy.

9:54 a.m.

- Ms. Inga Watkins was introduced as the meeting facilitator.
- Ms. Watkins asked the group to first discuss the priorities for the current and future federal funding provided to the State as a result of the 2016 floods.
- The initial list of priority areas includes (these areas were inferred based on currently planned funding allocations):
 1. Housing
 2. Infrastructure
 3. Economic Development
 4. Disaster Planning/Preparedness
- Ms. Watkins opened the conversation by asking the group if they could come to a consensus on what the State's priorities should be.
- General Hoyer proposed adding mitigation/resilience to the Disaster Planning/Preparedness priority item. He commented that "if we don't include mitigation in what we do, we are just going to keep having the same issues we are already facing."
- After additional affirmation from others, Mitigation was then added to the Planning/Preparedness priority item.
- Jimmy Gianato mentioned that the planning and preparedness priority may not necessarily be a priority but program requirements for HMGP for State and Local Hazard Mitigation Plans.
- *The group agreed that planning and preparedness should not need be a separate priority.*
- MaryAnn Tierney suggested that Mitigation/Resiliency not be an individual priority but a guiding principle that would influence all of the priorities the group set for not only the current funding but for future disasters.

- Several participants indicated that you can rebuild houses and you can rebuild/mitigate infrastructure but something would have to be done about jobs and the economy to keep people in West Virginia.
- *The group agreed that the mitigation/resiliency and job creation would be guiding principles.*
- *These two principles should be included as “decision points” in determining whether the state will fund a project or not.*
- Ms. Watkins asked the group to identify any other potential priorities but none were added to the list.
- *The group came to a consensus on the following three priority areas (in no particular order):*
 - *Housing*
 - *Infrastructure*
 - *Economic Development*
- Ms. Watkins then asked the group if there could be a consensus on ranking the three priorities.
- Conversation was started by General Hoyer who indicated that he did not feel that housing was any longer the top priority. He indicated that through the State VOAD and other faith-based groups, at least half of the 2,000 homes damaged in June 2016 had been repaired/rebuilt. Therefore housing was no longer the top priority. There was agreement with this from Mr. Farkas, Mr. Rogers, and others who voiced concern that if infrastructure was not the first priority the main issues facing West Virginia would not be addressed.
 - Mr. Farkas mentioned that if there was a way to focus on larger, more “cross-border” type projects, the state would really start to address flooding issues.
 - It was also mentioned that the state “gets in its own way with laws that are passed”. An example was put forward of an unnamed community that has the resources to maintain a nearby waterway that causes flooding due to debris build-up but they would not do the maintenance work on the waterway because they were afraid of violating a state law.
 - The representative from the Department of Highways indicated they have funding for highways but there was not really a mechanism for “looking forward” for their projects at this time indicating that they worked project by project.
- After further discussion confirming that infrastructure would be the top priority, Mr. Rogers indicated that he understood that each program had certain requirements but he asked if there was a way to redistribute the \$106 million in CDBG-DR to reallocate some of those funds to other priority areas.
- Julie Alston indicated that it is possible but that it would not be an easy move due to programmatic requirements set by HUD and the Federal Register Notice, which dictates that a certain percentage of that funding be allocated directly to housing and that funding that does not go directly to housing still has to tie back into housing.
- Julie Alston also indicated that the state would have to demonstrate that the unmet housing needs in the state, which was the basis for the CDBG-DR request, had been met. Something not easily done as the state just submitted a substantial amendment to their Administrative Plan that was still based on a significant unmet housing need.
- Ms. Alston was asked what documentation at what level of granularity would be needed to satisfy HUD to reallocate some of the CDBG-DR funding. She indicated that she would have to research that with the HUD Regional Office to confirm.
- *There was a consensus from the group that the Department of Commerce should work with HUD to determine what would be required (i.e. what documentation and what level of granularity) would be required to redistribute the current CDBG-DR funds to other priority areas.*

- Based on this conversation, General Hoyer suggested that Infrastructure should be the top priority. The group agreed.
- Mr. Rogers suggested that job creation be the second priority to which the group agreed.
- Housing, based on early conversation was discussed as the third priority.
- *The group came to the consensus that the following are the priorities ranked from first to third:*
 1. *Infrastructure*
 2. *Economic Development*
 3. *Housing*
- Ms. Watkins then indicated that time had run out for this meeting. MaryAnn Tierney suggested that a second meeting be held around mid-December. The focus would be to determine the status of the amendment to the CDBG-DR Action Plan.
- Ms. Watkins then provided information on the role of the Action Officers and asked the group to consider these roles and identify any additions or edits needed. These roles could be the first agenda item for the next meeting. The roles that were listed included:
 1. Identify agency programs, resources and authorities to support disaster recovery.
 2. Address priority areas where consensus was not gained and provide recommendations to senior officials.
 3. Identify additional resources and technical assistance that can be offered to disaster impacted communities.
 4. Identify additional coordination opportunities within department and network.
 5. Create the framework and strategies for an action plan related to recovery efforts.

11:12 a.m.

- Meeting adjourned